

directly. Only the good could hold property of him truly, and every good man possessed all things. The bad possessed nothing, although they seemed to possess. Hence he argued in favour of communism. All things must be held in common by the righteous, for all the righteous possess all. After this curious metaphysical juggle, he makes a right about face, and states that in practical life the good must leave the bad in possession, that a wicked master must be obeyed, and that resistance and revolution are justified by God only under certain strictly limited conditions.¹ The practical application of his theory, as regards secular society, was quite conservative, for he did not apply it at all. But the mere fact that the great schoolman had given his blessing to the theory of communism was welcome news to agitators throughout the country. To Oxford, men of all sorts and all classes congregated, and from Oxford they spread over England, each with his own version of intellectual discoveries made there. Such was the Clarendon Press of the period, and it is impossible to tell how many different versions or travesties of the 'Be Dominio Civili' it supplied.

Meanwhile "Wycliffe himself went on his way, became more and more interested in Church affairs, lost all interest in his old theories about possession, and as he became more revolutionary in religion, became more conservative in social and political questions. He exalted the power of the King and the temporal lords, in order to forge a weapon with which to strike down the Church. His theory, as he stated it over and over again both before and after the Bising, was that temporal lords had a right to their property, but that Churchmen had no right to theirs, because they ought to live in evangelical poverty on the alms of the faithful.² This strict contrast between clerical and lay property is the most marked feature of his writings from 1377 onwards. Of communism we hear not another word. If before 1381 he himself sent out any Poor Priests, he sent them to preach this doctrine, and not communism, or revolt of any sort against lay lordship.

¹ See Ap.

* Matt., 230, 412, 451, 471, 475-6, 480; *De Off. Reg.*; *JDialogus*, cap. ii.